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Metropolitan Julian Sas-Kuilovsky
(1826-1900)

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Митрополит Юліян Сас-Куїловський
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Metropolitan Julian Sas-Kuilovsky

(1826-1900)

Ireneus Nazarko, OSBM

Julian Sas-Kuilovsky[1], born May 1, 1826 in Koniushky Korolivski (Komarno),[2] was probably the eldest of the large family of Benedict Kuilovsky, the pastor of Koniushky, and Catherine Kushchekevych. His brother Leo was surgeon in Bolechiw.[3] Julian received his early education in the public schools in Rudky and Sambir. He finished high school in Lviw in 1845. In 1846 he enrolled in the philosophy faculty of the University of Lviw.[4]

These were stormy and restless years. The revolutionary call to freedom penetrated even to the outlying Galicia. As usual it was the students who first responded. Stirred by them the Polish nobility strove to restore the Polish state. In 1848 revolution broke out in Hungary. The armed Hungarian forces stationed in Galicia crossed the Carpathians into Hungary, leaving only a small army that remained loyal to the emperor. The detested Austrian officials, the majority of whom were Czechs, were helpless in such circumstances.

The young Kuilovsky was also affected by this movement. He enrolled in the Polish militia; and in 1848 he was arrested for spreading anti-Austrian propaganda. He was dismissed from the University. Through the intervention of Bishop I. Snihursky of Peremyshl, a relative on his mother's side, he was readmitted. Following the bishop's death in 1847 he was once more dismissed. It was with difficulty that he found provisional employment as a clerk in the taxation office of Peremyshl.[5] With the proclamation of the Constitution in 1848, he was once more readmitted to the University. His comrades in the newly-formed Polish

National Guard elected him officer, and later, member of the county council as representative of the student body. Sent to Lviw to represent the county council, Kuilovsky was once more arrested. This time he was freed through the intervention of certain prominent circles. Politically compromised in Galicia, he left for Hungary.[6] In Brasso he enlisted in the Polish legion of Count Zamojski and Dembinski, who had joined forces with the Hungarian insurgents. For his valous at the battles of Szeged and Temesvar he was made lieutenant of the cavalry.[7]

The insurrection of Kossuth ended in failure. The Russian armies of Tsar Nicholas I[8] succeeded in suppressing the Hungarian revolution for the Habsburgs according to the Holy Alliance. The insurrection quashed, Kuilovsky fled to Turkey, where he was interned - first near Viden, and later at Shumly. In order to obtain his liberty he enlisted in the Turkish army. He soon advanced to the rank of captain, and became member of Omar Pasha's war staff. His duties brought him to Constantinople,[9] where he met a group of French monks, possibly the Lazarists. This friendship awakened old memories of the ancient priestly traditions of his family. With their help he obtained a passport and money for the voyage to Rome where he was to study theology. With him was to go Korostensky, also the son of a priest. Trying to save money the two boarded a boat to Marseilles, whence they had been promised free passage to Rome. But instead, they were jailed by the local authorities for lack of requisite documents. Thanks to the intercession of Prince Adam Chartoryski, the patron of Polish emigrants, they were freed and made their way to Paris to the oriental institute, founded by Fr. Hippolyte Terlecky.[10] These were Terlecky's first two - and for many year - sole students.[11] Kuilovsky completed his theological studies in the Seminary of St. Sulpice with a master's degree in Sacred Theology. He was ordained in 1854 for the eastern missions with an

indult of Pius IX.[12]

During his Paris sojourn he was invited one Easter to the home of the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz. When the Easter rite of the blessing of the Paskha was completed, Mickiewicz burst into tears. Years later Metropolitan Kuilovsky related this event to the seminarians in Lviw. Among these was the future pastor of Zubrec, Vjacheslav Zbudovsky, who repeated this account in 1909 to a number of guests among whom was Professor L. Horbachevsky, now residing in Montreal. It was then already conjectured that Mickiewicz was perhaps originally a Byelorussian Uniate.[13]

The eastern mission lacked funds, and so Fr. Kuilovsky was temporarily assigned as chaplain of a convent of Benedictine nuns. A year later the association was dissolved. Kuilovsky was appointed rector of the Seminary in Corfu, a position, however, he did not accept because of ill health. Thoughts of his homeland and family kept returning more frequently. The absolutism of the imperial court had become tempered, so Kuilovsky petitioned for pardon. The amnesty was granted in 1857 through the intervention of Bishop Jakymowych of Peremyshl. Upon his return Fr. Kuilovsky was charged with the administration of Russky Selo near Dubetsko in the Birchan deanery.[14] The collators and the neighbouring gentry got to like Fr. Kuilovsky. A parish was formed in the village and he became its first pastor and dean in 1860.

In 1878 he accompanied Bishop Stupnicky to Rome, where he was presented to Pope Leo XIII. Here he was made monsignor. In 1882 he became canon of the cathedral chapter. He succeeded Fr. I Ilnytsky as rector of the theological seminary when the latter died; eventually he became pastor of the cathedral parish. This office revealed his love for the house of God and the divine cult. Though he was by no

means an outstanding speaker, the novelty of his French style attracted many priests and faithful to the Vesper sermons in the cathedral. In 1887 he was called to Stanislaviw as archpriest of its first bishop, G. Pelesh.[15] Here, however, he found it difficult to accustom himself to the new surroundings; and it was with joy that he received word of Bishop Stupnitsky's wish to call him back as his auxiliary.

His candidacy was supported in court by the Polish nobility. Pope Leo XIII nominated him titular bishop of Hefesten, assigning him as auxiliary of the Ordinary of Peremyshl, May 26, 1890.[16] The new bishop was soon charged with the administration of the diocese, for the ailing Bishop Stupnitsky was unable to continue with his work. He visited the parishes of the diocese, preached at vespers in the cathedral, of which he had retained the canonry.[17] With Bishop Stupnitsky's death, Bishop Pelesh was appointed his successor;[18] and Bishop Kuilovsky was made ordinary of Stanislaviw.[19] In September 1891, he published his first pastoral letter on the duties of the clergy, with appropriate lessons for the faithful. He reminded the priests of their obligation of daily praying the divine office, and encouraged the faithful to persevere in prayer.[20] This same year he attended the provincial Synod of Lviw with 32 of his priests.[21] He helped in settling the presynodal formalities, but remained more of an observer during the sessions. Quite possibly he was not too much in favour of holding the synod because of his fear of all novelty. Yet when the occasion presented itself he proved himself a staunch defender of the rights and privileges of the Greek-Catholic Church, which he so loved.[22]

The Synod over, he began the canonical visitation of his diocese. Unlike his predecessor, though, he declined all display of solemnity in the official receptions, for he disliked all show of pomp and splendour.

He rarely took part in such events and never organized them himself. This was one cause of the misunderstandings that arose between him and his clergy, which was accustomed to receive its bishop with somewhat more fanfare. In 1892 the governor obliged him to make a canonical visitation of the Sniatyn deanery to combat the radicals. Bishop Kuilovsky's displeasure was quite evident. He refused to act as gendarme for the governor. This was the beginning of a growing antipathy to bureaucrats from the highest to the lowest. The Polish nobility was also to be disappointed, for he refused to be an instrument to their schemes. He turned a deaf ear to all their complaints about his clergy, and often signalized the denounced priests.[23] Under him was begun the work of restoring the cathedral, to which he contributed a handsome sum.

In 1893 on the occasion of the jubilee of Pope Leo XIII, Bishop Kuilovsky took part in a pilgrimage to Rome with Metropolitan Sylvester and other bishops. On May 19 the Holy Father received the Ukrainian group in audience.[24] Upon their return to Vienna on June 8 the Metropolitan and Bishop Kuilovsky were received with demonstrations.[25]

In 1896 he announced the convocation of the diocesan synod for the following year. His failing health, however, did not allow him to take part in it personally. His last years in Stanislaviw were spent in the quiet of his palace. He was made assistant to the papal throne May 28, 1898.[26]

It was no little surprise for all to hear of his nomination to the Metropolitan see of Lviw. The Emperor Francis Joseph had actually nominated him. The nomination was confirmed August 30, 1899 by the pope.[27] The new metropolitan with his customary humility deferred all show of pomp in his reception. In mid September he published his first

pastoral letter as metropolitan on the treasures of the Catholic faith. In it he requested prayers for his "unworthy and sinful person, ailing and bent by age."[28] On November 25 of that year he ordained a number of candidates to the priesthood.[29] And on January 23, 1900 he published his second pastoral on the meaning of the indulgences of the jubilee year in Rome, and on the pilgrimage to the eternal city. From his letter it would seem that he had intended to take a personal part in the pilgrimage.[30] It was on March 6, 1900,[31] that he once more ordained a number of priests in St. George's Cathedral. Soon after he published a final pastoral on the fast of the Quadragesima.[32] His health broke down and he was confined to his bed; his doctors forbade all visits, even from his closest family.[33] He died May 4 in his seventy-fifth year after an agony of two days, comforted by the last sacraments and a special Apostolic Blessing.[34] The Polish Archbishop of Lviw, Severin Dombrowa, had died the day before.

Metropolitan Kuilovsky was buried May 8, 1900 in great honour. Among those present at the funeral were the Armenian archbishop of Lviw, Isakovych, the Latin auxiliary, Weber, our Peremyshl Bishop Chekhovych, and Bishop Sheptytsky of Stanislaviw. Fr. Lew Turkewych preached on the humility of the deceased. The funeral procession moved from St. George's Cathedral to the cemetery in the Lychakiv suburb, led by the veterans, brotherhoods, monks, seminarians, and youth. The family followed behind the coffin with the president of Lviw, Malachowski, the governor, Pininsky, and other dignitaries. The peasants of Russky Selo, where the deceased had once been pastor, carried a wreath of living roses. The peasant multitudes, who had come to Lviw for the feast of St. George, now bade farewell to their late pastor.[35]

Here found his rest the youth whose early years had witnessed so much suffering. In his old age Divine Providence had raised him to the summit of our ecclesiastical hierarchy. We cannot explain his life in light of our contemporary views, for his age was a completely different one. It was quite common to see the Ukrainian youth taking part in Polish insurrections. Having no political ideals of their own they sacrificed their lives and health to the ideals of foreign nations. Such also was Kuilovsky in his youth.

He was a man of refined culture, a true aristocrat. He was an idealist. Despite his foreign education and affiliation with the Polish aristocracy he loved our Church and its traditions. As priest and bishop his meekness and humility led him to avoid all show of pomp. And he was especially generous to the poor. Politics did not interest him, for despite his early revolutionary activity he remained faithful to the Habsburg dynasty. Above all he was devoted to the Holy See. Those who remember him speak of him only well.[36]

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3. S. Matkowsky, Try Synodalyn Archijerei, Lviw 1932, p. 15.
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12. A. Welykyj, Documenta, op. cit., pp. 266-67.

13. For this information I am indebted to Professor L. Horbachevsky of Montreal. The conjectures of the guests at that reception would seem to find confirmation in Michiewicz's friendship with Fr. Ivan Horbatsevych, a Byelorussian priest of the Byzantine Rite. Above this cf. L. Luzhnycsky.

14. S. Matkowsky, op. cit., p. 19.

15. Cf. Shematysm vseho klyra gr. kat. Eparchiji Stanyslavovskoj na rik Bozhy 1887, p. XXIV.

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17. Cf. Shematysm vseho klyra gr. kat. Eparchiji sojedenenych Peremyskoji, Samborskoji y Sianotskoji na rik Bozhy 1891, p. XIV.

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